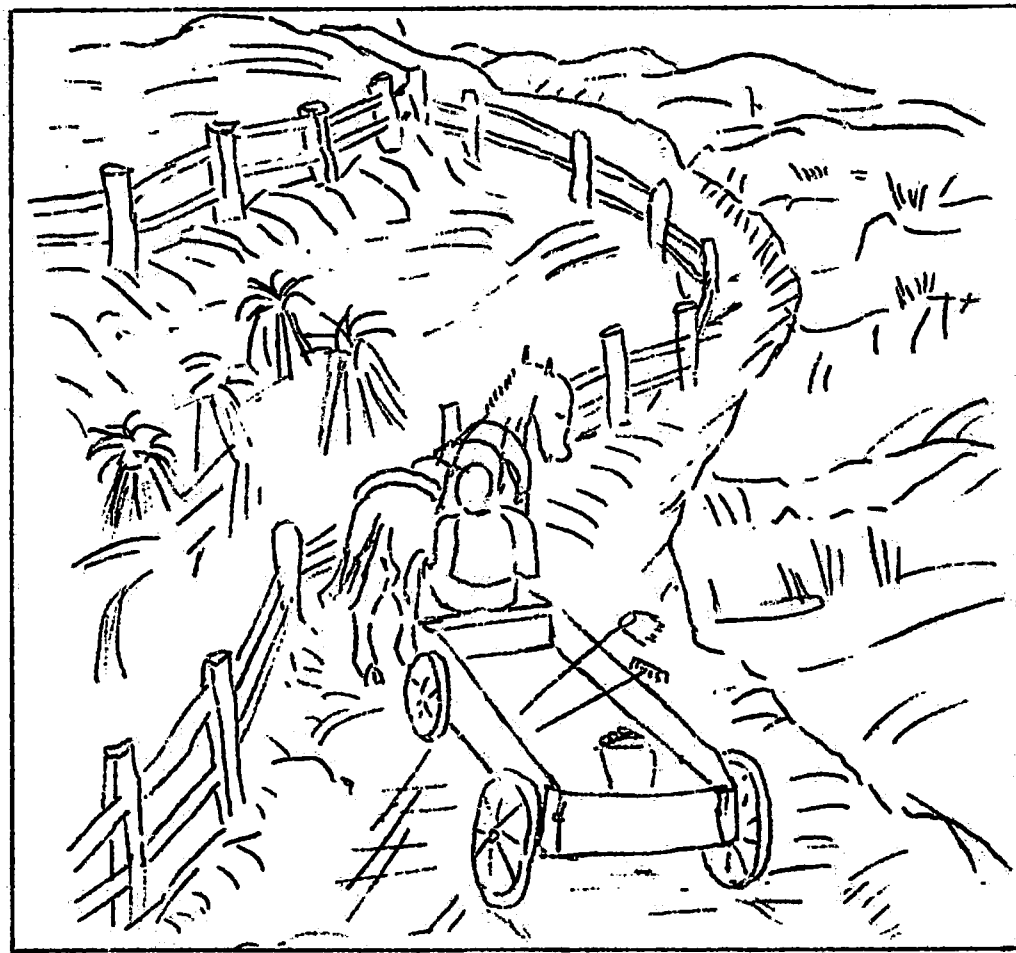


FRANKLIN

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN FOLK LORE



VOL I No. 8

NOV ISSUE

AMERICAN SQUARE DANCE GROUP

52 EAST 13TH ST.

NEW YORK CITY

MARGOT MAYO

LEADER



"PROMENADE"

Official Organ of the American Square Dance Group

"The purposes of the American Square Dance Group shall be to make available those rich stores of native dance, music, drama and general Americana which together comprise American folk culture; to conduct such activities without regard for race, creed, color or social position; to cooperate with all who sincerely entertain similar views".

(quote from A.S.D.G. Constitution)

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EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor-in-chief....Margot Mayo

Literary Editor....Irving Feinberg

Production Manager...Alan Swartz

In answer to many inquiries about our Group and its activities, we offer, hereby, an explanation, in part at least, of ourselves.

The American Square Dance Group is an organization whose primary purpose is the spreading of the knowledge of American culture. Organized seven seasons ago by Margot Mayo, the Group has given many thousands an acquaintance with the dances, songs, and customs of our American people.

Here in the city, the Group holds "open house" parties on the second and fourth Saturday evenings of each month. At these parties, we teach American folk dances of all kinds to our guests, and end the evening with some folk dancing of other nations. We also "rest" by singing American folk songs. Since all dances are taught, experience is not necessary for complete enjoyment of the evening. The fee for these parties is 40¢ for the evening, and includes instruction, checking and refreshments.

Our Group has three folk dance divisions; the "demonstration" group set rehearses Thursday evenings. One group meeting on Friday evenings is for new members and those who do not have the time or energy for the demonstration group. The Saturday morning section is the "Junior Division", whose members range in age from ten years thru the high school age. The Junior Division is also inaugurating an "open house" for children and young people, to be held the first Saturday afternoon of each month. The fee for these parties is twenty-five cents and also includes instruction, checking and refreshments.

On Saturday, December 14, a new activity for members of the Group will be organized in the form of a folk chorus to study and sing American folk songs. Knowledge of musical notation is not necessary. All these activities are carried on at our studio at 52 East 13th Street.

The demonstration group performs not only at open house parties, but is available for teaching and performances at various clubs, etc.

The studio is available for renting. For information regarding membership, performances, renting of studio, openhouses, etc., write Margot Mayo, 585 West 214th Street, New York City or call Lorraine 7-0174.

AMERICAN FOLK INSTRUMENTS

The Banjo

To quote from the "Dictionary of Musical Terms" by Theodore Baber, a banjo is "a variety of guitar, its body formed in a circular hoop, over the upper sides of which is stretched parchment or skin. It has a long neck, with or without frets and from five to nine strings, the melody string which is the shortest and played with the thumb of the right hand, lying outside of and next to the lowest bass string."

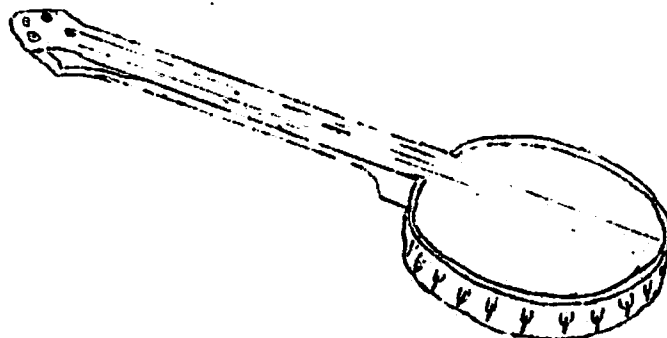
I'll bet cousin Rufus down in Kentucky would not understand the above description of a "banjer" nor would he know that the banjo is considered the only 'true' American instrument, as it is supposed to have been brought here by the negro slaves and developed, particularly on Southern plantations for use as accompaniment to songs and dances.

Dr. Satis Coleman tells us in "Creative Music in the Home" that, "the banjo is a modern instrument which resembles the lute type in having a long fingerboard and only a few strings, but differs from them, having a stretched skin as a resonant body, while the lute has a sound box made of wood." Dr. Coleman also suggests that the Arab might have given it to the negroes of West Africa who in turn brought it to America.

The five string banjo, called the "minstrel banjo" is still the most popular instrument in the South and is used as an accompaniment for both singing and dancing. The use of the fifth string or "thumb string" adds an "Oriental" flavor to the Anglo-Saxon folk music of our Southland.

The banjos now-a-days are manufactured, not homemade, as in days of yore, but in old days, the instruments were home made with whatever materials were found at hand.

Cousin "Rufus" Crisp, in Allen, Kentucky, who meets the mail trains, and walks some six miles each day to reach his farm outside of town, wouldn't know what this article is all about, since to "pick a banjer" is the most natural thing under the sun. He "jest can't figger out" why all people can't naturally play a banjo.



OUR THANKS TO THIS READER !

We are extremely grateful for the interest shown by Miss Lisowska, one of our readers, and for her taking an active part in the American Square Dance Group program by contributing this dance. Her generosity in sharing her folk knowledge is in the true spirit of American Folk Culture.

* * * * *

Dear Miss Mayo;

My sister, knowing that I am a square dance enthusiast, sent me a copy of "Promenade"....needless to say, I was delighted, otherwise I would not be prompted to write to you.

I am taking the liberty of enclosing a dance which is an original breakdown. I don't think you will find it in other sections of the country. It is named for one of the numerous ponds in the vicinity of Schrecon Lake, in the Adirondacks.

I hope you can use the Johnson Pond Breakdown---it's loads of fun !

Very sincerely,

Winifred Lisowska

JOHNSON POND BREAKDOWN

"Eight hands around to the left
I guess the other way is best
Right hand swing with your partner
Left hand your corner
Left hand your partner
Right hand your corner
Both hands your partner
Both hands your corner
Do-si-do your partner
Do-si-do- your corner
Elbow hook with partners
Elbow hook with corners
Partners all.....(partners balance)
Swing partners....(partners take dance position and turn in place.
Promenade Corner...(Corners take dance position and promenade
around the set once. Everyone now has a new partner. The
dance is repeated three times more until everyone has his
original partner.)

We imagine from the calls, that a fast Irish tune would be suitable for the dance. We hope Miss Lisowska will send us more dances, and perhaps elaborate on variations, if any, in the square dancing of any region of which she writes.

NOTES ON AFRICAN MUSIC

by Josef Marais

The other day, a New York newspaper, commenting on my Decca album of "Songs of the South African Veld", started off by saying how agreeably surprised they were to find the songs were "melodious" and not full of "tom-tom rhythms". On another occasion, a salesman of one of the record companies reported that almost invariably he was greeted with the remark of prospective dealer-customers: "No! - African music doesn't sell - not interested! Only meant for collectors of tom-tom stuff." He said, so accustomed was he to this opening, that he decided to play one of the Bushveld songs first before mentioning the word "Africa." That worked, for they suddenly found the songs had nothing to do with what they termed "African music." Then the other day, I received a letter from a listener to my radio program, telling me she had picked for her subject, in a University research assignment, "African music." I felt terribly sorry for her, because that subject would need ten years of intensive study, at least.

The crux of the matter is that Africa is so vast a continent that one dare not classify a type of music as "African." To a South African, Morocco, Algeria, and Egypt are practically the other side of the world; and I have no doubt that the peoples of the Sahara desert, or, for that matter, the Gold Coast or Nigeria, are totally non-conversant with the ways and habits of their fellow continent-dwellers of South Africa.

To my mind, one could roughly group the music of the African continent under three headings - and remember this is very broadly speaking, for there is no time or space to go into hundreds of sub-headings. I would say there is North African type of music, a Central African, and a South African.

Firstly the North African. This is Moorish, Arabic - definitely influenced by Asia.

The Central African music is the "purest" African there is, as one would expect from the part of the Continent least penetrated by non-African races. The aborigines in this loosely termed "Central Africa" are the Bantus. Included in this term - the word merely means "the people" - are such tribes as the Zulus, Basutos, Ama-Xosas, and the thousands of people inhabiting the Belgian Congo and West African regions. Their music is a fascinating study, for the musical scale upon which their chants are based, served as a basis for the later-developed American spiritual. Remember, the West coast of Africa is the home of the ancestors of the American colored people, and the old chants were bound to produce a culture independent both of Africa and the European settlers of America. It did, and I say thankfully, for to me the American spiritual is the most moving of all music. . . . Perhaps I feel that way because I know both Africa and America and I find in those songs the merging of an ancient continent with a new. I hope I have not given the impression that the American spiritual is a variation of African music. I merely point out that the basic scale of the African chants is very similar to the American spiritual; the reason being perfectly logical. The chants, as sung in Africa, are

very short, and repeated over and over again for hours. The effect of this monotonous music is almost similar to a drug. The listeners are gradually worked into a frenzy, everyone joining in with clapping and singing, and it is the very monotony of it which is the music's greatest power. One can imagine what the effect is when the leading voice, after singing the same chant for an hour will suddenly introduce a little musical variation! The result is astounding. As if a new shot of the drug had been administered, everyone enters into the singing of the new variation with enthusiastic energy...until that becomes the monotonous staple musical list, delivering it's narcotic reaction.

Last of the African groups, is the South African folk music. Let me once make it clear that this music is imported music, introduced by the white European settlers just as in America. The special stamp of humor the song's bear, however, is largely due to the remarkable colored peoples of the Cape. They have a musical souls, and a rare type of fun, and I think a slice of credit is due them for the uniqueness of these little songs. During the gold and diamond rushes of the later 19th century many Americans came over to the Transvaal and Rhodesia, and that fact explains the great similarity between the songs of both countries. In one case, "Just before the battle mother", the entire song survived, but under the much more pleasant title of "When will we be married Gertjie?". If you told a South African of the existence of the American song, he'd be flabbergasted, for to him that is a folk-song. And I think we may grant him that in his folk-lore, don't you? - for it has nothing to do with fighting and wars as in the original song, though the melody is almost note for note the same as the original. However, most of the songs sung in South Africa have only very slight tracings of the original sources and may be truly regarded as the independent folk-lore of a young country. By all of which you will have noticed that, (a) Africa is very big, and (b) America is very close to it.

J.M.



EDITOR'S NOTE

After listening to the radio programs of Josef Marais and wondering just what sort of person Mr. Marais is, and how authentic his music (after all, what do we know about African music?) we decided that the best thing to do would be to locate Mr. Marais.

Josef Marais is genuinely proud of the folk music he is presenting, and boyishly happy when people like it. He seems oblivious to the fact that people like his voice or the manner of presenting the songs, and he gives all the credit to the folk-music. He beams joyfully when speaking of the songs, quite in

the manner of a proud papa!

He is a professional musician and a "swell guy" and when approached for an article for "Promenade" explaining African music, he agreed despite the fact that he is a very busy person. We like people like that!!!

NEW "OKIE" RECORDS

Less than a year ago, "Grapes of Wrath" appeared on the screen recapturing John Steinbeck's gripping story of the "Dust Bowl Refugees" or "Okie" farmers who were driven by dust, "cats", and despair into California. From these Okies have come such ballad singers as Woodie Guthrie to tell their tales of hardship and grievance.

And so, just last summer, two members of the City College Public Speaking Department, Messrs. Robert Sonkin and Charles Todd, with recording apparatus, circulated among the government camps and "jungle camps" to record the songs, dances, stories, jokes, and arts of these migratory farmers. Their visits netted them a collection of over two hundred recordings of the songs, ballads, and stories which were deposited with Alan Lomax of the Library of Congress as a cultural documentation. In recording these songs, etc., Messrs. Sonkin and Todd found the Okies to be a rather taciturn lot and also rather reluctant to sing their songs for two "out of towners". Once the ice was broken, it was only a matter of time before each one coaxed the other to sing a piece. The group gathered around and listened to the records made in other camps. This certainly inspired many Okies, for each Okie knows a better version or a better song than the next one.



We learned from Mr. Todd that the migratory workers in government camps have weekly programs; one evening boxing matches, another their own amateur hour. They dance a great deal, dividing the dancers into groups according to the ages of the dancers. For the "young luns" there were lively round or "city" dances, and for the old folks, sedate square dances. When the men are not working or dancing, they will usually be found playing dominoes or checkers in a small shack which bears the amusing sign over the doorway, "Spit and Argue Club". On the point of folk dancing, when returning to New York, Mr. Sonkin remarked, "It seems to me that there is more square dancing going on in New York City than down in the Okie camps." (This certainly is encouraging!)

At the moment, these two gentlemen are setting down their observations for a future article in the magazine supplement of the New York Times. We're keeping an eye open for that article. From what we've already heard, it's going to be an invaluable asset and a bright light in the folk-loreist's collection.

When duplicate recordings are made in Washington and Messrs. Sonkin and Todd may reclaim these records, we've been promised to be among the first to hear and review them.

DIALS AND DISCS

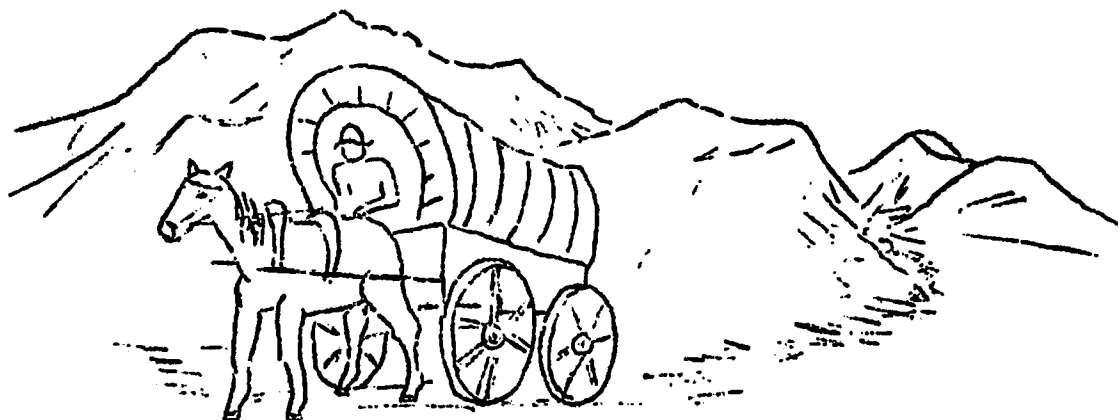
"Songs of the South African Veld", a Decca number 113, is a very charming group of folksongs collected, arranged and translated by Josef Marais. There are eight songs in an attractive album, with leaflet, with information not only about the songs and their history, but also about the country from which they come.

These records grow on one! At first hearing one is struck by the similarity between these songs and some of our American folk songs. There is also a marked Scandinavian flavor about some of the songs. But on re-hearing these records one becomes conscious of a quality, a kind of atmosphere created by the quiet sincerity of the singers. The melodies are simple and "catching" and the arrangements so subtle that one is not aware of "harmonizing" and it's only when you find yourself singing along with the records that you suddenly discover that other voices have joined the solo voice! It is this natural treatment of vocal and instrumental background that makes this album so intimate. You feel as if you were seated on the front porch of a big rambling house, or at a campfire, with men who have worked hard all day and are now relaxing, smoking and singing! There is a distinct out-of-door tang in these songs.

The orchestra is not ornate, as it might easily have been. The principle instruments used are the accordion, guitar, and an occasional wind instrument. These are the instruments which might be carried along on a trip, and one is not suddenly confronted with a full-fledged orchestra in the midst of the African Veld (as so frequently happens in the movies!)

So far, our favorites in this collection are... well, all of them! When we first tuned in Josef Marais' radio programs over WJZ, we were curious about the music and about the man responsible for the program. We weren't sure that the songs were really authentic folk songs (after all, what do we know about African music?), so we interviewed Mr. Marais, and found him most charming.... so charming that he agreed despite the fact that he's terribly busy, to dash off an article for "Promenade". We like people like that!!

Josef Marais was born on the Bushveld and knows whereof he sings. He is a trained musician and both his volumes of records and his radio program are sincere efforts to present his country and his people in a truly genuine light.



DIALS AND DISCS

American Folk Songs

This Decca Album, number 25, in which Frank Luther, assisted by Zora Layman and Leonard Stokes, sings numerous American folk songs, is certainly not up to the standard of other Decca presentations. Don't misunderstand us; the singers do a splendid job, the accompanying orchestra is one of the best we've heard yet; all of the songs can be classed as folk songs - but something is definitely wrong. It is what we would call a 'nervous' album, jumping frantically from song to song, key to key, mood to mood in the most disconcerting manner. After the many rehearsals of the thirty-four songs combined with such a wierd disconcert on the five records, we decided that here, unfortunately, was a superabundance of folk music !!

We are so awfully sorry that Mr. Luther did not limit the material he presents, to one or at most two songs on each record, for one is just getting accustomed to one song when it is whisked away and another one flung forward with complete disregard for the resulting emotional disturbances of the listeners !! We would have enjoyed hearing more of some of the songs (and much less of this particular version of "Barbara Allen" !) and certainly a complete side of square dance tunes played by the orchestra would be most welcome.

We hope that Decca will sometime soon, get out a revision, as it were; of this album, but presenting fewer songs and those which merge more agreeably together.

We cannot recommend this album except as an anthology of American folk songs - a kind of Sandburg's "Songbook" compressed into a very short space and time.

* * * * *

Continuing on the Columbia School of the Air series of programs entitled "Wellsprings of Music", American folk songs may be heard on alternate Tuesday mornings, 9:15 to 9:45. The schedule for the next few months is as follows:

Nov 12 - Songs of Make Believe	Dec 10 - Lyric Songs
Nov 26 - Animal Songs	Jan 7 - British ballads in America

Sunday	9:30 A.M.	WABC	Wings over Jordan
	11:30 A.M.	WNYC	Negro Melody Singers } alternate
	11:30 A.M.	WNYC	Folk Music } Sundays
	2:30 P.M.	WABC	Flow Gently Sweet Rhythm
Monday	10:30 P.M.	WABC	Back Where I Come From
Tuesday	9:15 A.M.	WABC	Wellsprings of Music
	4:30 P.M.	WNYC	Adventures in Music
Wednesday	10:30 P.M.	WABC	Back Where I Come From
Thursday	1:30 P.M.	WNYC	Lordbelly - songs
Friday	3:30 P.M.	WQXR	American Concert
	10:30 P.M.	WABC	Back Where I Come From

"Flow Gently Sweet Rhythm" is a new and entertaining variety program with John Kirby's six-piece orchestra, featuring the Golden Gate Quartet. Maxine Sullivan sings old world ballads arranged in swing time by Lou Singer. And we must admit he does a beautiful job on "Barbara Allen" and "If I had a Ribbon Bow" !!



Two Books on AMERICAN FOLK MUSIC
SINGING AMERICA

"Singing America", compiled, arranged and edited for the National Recreation Association, by Augustus Zanzig, is published by C.C. Birchard and Company. This is by far the best collection of this type that I have yet encountered, and it is very encouraging to find such unusual and important folk songs arranged for schools, camps and choral groups and informal singing.

The section of the folk songs of the United States is particularly important, as the volume contains among the thirty-four selections, representative songs of all the different types which we analyzed in one of our previous issues of "Promenade". These songs range from sacred old Harp hymns such as "Gondrous Love" and "The Poor Way farin' Stranger" to worksongs and ditties. There are also several lovely American Negro spirituals, and some sea chanties. There are only three Stephen Foster songs in this collection, and that speaks well for Mr. Zanzig !!

There are in all, some hundred and twenty songs in this volume, divided into ten sections devoted to such various categories as "Songs of the U.S.A.", "Folk Songs of Canada", "Other Folk Songs", "Composer's Corner", "Christmas Songs", "Hymns and Chorales", "Patriotic Songs", "Rounds" and a section of texts only.

Many of the songs are arranged for part-singing and are excellent for use in schools, choruses and camps. In the accompanying edition there are directions for the dances which go along with some of the folk songs. There are footnotes which explain the customs upon which the songs are based, such as the note about corn husking which accompanies the song "Shuckin' of the Corn".

This collection is invaluable for teachers and students alike, but it is the choice of the songs which is particularly thrilling to me because it makes available to the general public some less familiar folk songs which are extremely beautiful and will serve to build up a larger audience for true folk music.

If the children of this generation are exposed to folk music of this calibre, then we can hope for not only a more musical population, but we will have more understanding and better Americans!

Many thanks to the National Recreation Association and Augustus Zanzig for this addition to the available material in the folk field....



"CHRISTMAS IS COMING IN"

You can supply the rest of the paraphrase yourself...if you feel the way some of us do about Christmas gifts. But, since Christmas after all, is the season for exchanging presents, and, we hope, bringing a little joy, may we suggest a few presents which we think would really bring pleasure to their recipients. There will be a more complete list in the Dec. Issue:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Performer</u>	<u>Issued by</u>	<u>Reviewed Issue</u>
Songs of the South-			
African Vell	Josef Marais	Decca	7
Old World Ballads ...	Andrew R. Summers	Columbia	6
Songs of the Ameri-			
Can Revolution	John & Lucy Allison	Victor	4
Any records by	Old Hays Singers	Musicraft	3
Any records by	Golden Gate Quartet	Bluebird	4
Dustbowl Ballads	Woody Guthrie	Victor	6
Christmas Carols	John Jacob Niles	Victor	8

Unreviewed as yet, but recommended

Chain Gang Songs.....	Joshua White	Columbia
Ballad for Americans..	Paul Robeson	

BOOKS

<u>Title</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Publisher</u>	<u>Reviewed</u>
Body, Boots & Britches ..	H.J. Thompson	Lippincott	5
To Make My Bread	Grace Lumpkin		3
Dances of our pioneers ..	Grace Ryan	A.S. Barnes	7
Ballad Makin' in Kentucky..	Jean Thomas		7
The Sun Shines Bright ...	" "	Prentice-Hall	

CRAFTS

Hand woven materials, ties, coverlids, and so forth, lovely little wooden and glazed figures and many charming and inexpensive gifts are to be found in the Southern Highlands Shop in Radic City. Not only are these unusual and "folky", but these articles are made by members of a Southern Cooperative and 'you know', every little bit helps !!



NOTES OF INTEREST



On Sunday evening, Nov. 10, the A.S.D.G. gave itself a folk party, so that the members of the various divisions might become acquainted, and dance together as a complete membership group. The evening started earlier than scheduled, thanks to the Juniors, who couldn't wait for everyone to arrive, but started playing the piano and



calling the dances. By eleven o'clock, even the most experienced of us were tired enough to stop and sing some of our favorite folk songs while we rested.

We had an agreeable surprise when two American Indians, friends of Boris and Margot, "dropped in". They sang some of the tribal songs and explained some of their Indian customs for us. We hope they will come back again soon. When the party broke up, we decided that we must have another Group party very soon, as we had all had such a grand time.

Judy Alstadt (Junior
Pat Diska (Group)

Members of the Group danced recently at the Plum Point Hotel in New Windsor, Upstate, New York. And we were very happy to discover that the guests at the Hotel were familiar with and very partial to the Josef Marais "Songs of the African Bushveld" album. It just goes to show you that we have good taste in folk records !!!!!

John and Lucy Allison please note !!

The U.S. Daughters of 1812 were presented a volume of American music of the War of 1812, compiled by Miss Dorothea Dix Lawrence of Plainfield, New Jersey. At a meeting of this Group in Elizabeth, New Jersey, the presentation was made. Miss Lawrence is a great granddaughter of Colonel Roger Sherman Dix, for whom Fort Dix was named, and is chairman of music for the State Society. The book, which contains photostatic copies of the original compositions, will be placed in the Society's library in its Washington headquarters.



We hear tell that the National Recreation Association is publishing a booklet based on our article "Take a Peek at Dance Department" which we presented in Issue 6. This organization also publishes a monthly magazine, "Recreation", which affords excellent material for teachers and directors of both social and educational groups. The A.S.D.G. knows "Recreation" will continue to do a swell job !!

One of the American folk dances which we have revived in the A.S.D.G. is "Hull's Victory". This dates back to the War of 1812. It was first danced to celebrate Isaac Hull's victory over the British ship "Guerriere" and because of this victory, he was honored with a gold medal and his ship "Constitution" was nicknamed "Old Ironsides".